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AUTHOR Lerner, Marlene R.
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ABSTRACT

This paper examines secondary preservice student teachers' conceptions of teaching and reflections upon teaching experiences, as expressed in journals written by the student teachers. The paper presents excerpts from the journals of several student teachers. A study is then reported of a student teacher in social studies and his cooperating teacher, who each kept dialectical journals on the student teacher's actions and perceived experiences. The journal information was categorized into four domains: ability of self, classroom skills, subject content, and concern for students. A survey of student teachers and cooperating teachers was also conducted, with the result that cooperating teachers scored student teachers higher in teaching ability than did the student teachers themselves. The paper concludes that training in teacher education preparation programs can be demonstrated and better understood through the use of journals. Copies of survey forms are appended. (JDD)

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Preservice Teacher

The Preservice Teacher Education Program
as Described in Journals

Marlene R. Lerner

University of Missouri-Kansas City
School of Education, Room 319
615 E. 52 Street
Kansas City, MO 64110
(816) 235-2245

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**The Preservice Teacher Education Program
as Described in Journals**

On her first day of field study observation, August 27, Carmen wrote:

"I feel I must make my first entry of this journal on my first day of class. Boy, was I overwhelmed...I want to be a teacher more than anything I know. The scary part is--I want to be a good teacher. I want to make a difference!"

Students enter the final phases of their teacher education preparation program--field study and student teaching--ready to observe situations and demonstrate their competencies in subject content, curriculum development, and classroom management. Often preservice students follow prescriptive directions from their university supervisors or classroom cooperating teachers. Sometimes, these resource personnel encourage, but do not direct in absolutes. When this latter context emerges, preservice teachers learn to become more active learners as they "reflect on the origins, purposes, and consequences of their actions as well as on the material and ideological constraints and encouragements embedded in the classroom, school, and societal contexts in which they work" (Zeichner & Liston, 1987, p.23).

As Dewey discerned, differences exist between routine action and reflective action. All contracted teachers, field study students and student teachers act routinely at times, but the purposes of my journal studies are to determine what conceptions of teaching are thought about and acted upon in reflective

consideration by the secondary preservice student teacher. How, and do, the field study and student teachers reflect upon and process the teaching experiences within which they are immersed?

According to Herman (1985), although student teaching is considered the most influential component of teacher education programs, few studies actually illuminating what happens to the student teacher in the classroom or relating to personal achievements in student teaching situations have been conducted. This lack of illumination is compounded by the lack of adequate studies demonstrating these same components of reflection in field studies placements linking training, thought, and action in observations and first teaching opportunities.

Ayers and Thompson (1990) developed a survey which they distributed to their Tennessee students to measure the students' feelings of preparedness for student teaching. While nearly three-quarters of the students agreed that their college preparation for student teaching was adequate, the students did not agree that their classroom management skills were strong, that they felt confident in their abilities to discipline the students, or that they could accurately evaluate student progress. These skills are difficult to assess with traditional surveys and students are often reluctant to bring them up to their supervisors, who may also have been their methods teachers.

It is for these reasons that journals were introduced, along with a discussion of their purposes, the differences between journals and diaries, and the differences between an entry that fills up a page and one that provides the student with some insights about themselves as preservice teachers and the profession they have chosen. Excerpts from some of these journal entries have been included in this paper.

John. December 4.

"Overall, I would say the observation was a plus. You don't know what really is going on in a classroom unless you have been in there. This is a forward step for one before student teaching."

Carmen. December 9.

"Being a teacher is going to be hard work, and I'm ready to start!"

Mike. February 17.

"Are all the student teachers as concerned as I am that the class students will not be respectful toward them?"

Anita. September 17.

"Today my time at _____ was spent in observation. There's this student, Rockey...he's a real challenge for Kay [the contracted teacher]. He can be loud, offensive, and uses profanity...I'm sure I'll have students like Rockey, and right now, I'm unsure as to how I'll handle them."

Anita. September 24.

"What was particularly interesting to note was that...students behavior, to a large degree, varied according to the instructor. I guess this bears out the truth in the idea that the better teachers experience fewer behavioral problems."

While several studies have been conducted about the development of specific skills and competencies, and comparing attitudes and teacher preparedness of student teachers and their cooperating teachers (Tabachnick, Popkewitz, & Zeichner, 1979-1980), most studies deal with the elementary grade level student

teacher. And few have been conducted with field study and student teachers relating their interactions with students and other school personnel, and at what levels or depths they reflect upon their teaching, educational pedagogy, and content pedagogy while they are student teaching.

Judy. October 12.

"I love it--it's great to hear from a real classroom teacher--in a real classroom setting. It seems to bring all the points home. It's very different from sitting in a classroom on campus; that's too abstract."

Sandra. February 22.

"At this age the kids seem to be on a voyage of discovery; discovery of self and of others. A teacher's eyes should be a mirror in which the students can look into and see their best inner and outer selves."

A few researchers in recent years, such as Holmes (1989), sought to bridge similar reflective gaps with elementary level student teachers by incorporating journal writing into the field experiences and preservice teaching experiences of the students in the teacher preparation program. Sometimes the log entries are supplemented with interviews with the student teachers (Janssens, 1989). These studies show that having student teachers reflect on their teaching and their concerns is not an easy task. We know from observing preservice teachers at their placement sites and talking with them that student teachers reflect sometimes, at least, on their preparation and teaching, although they seem to lack an on-going or systematic method. Cook (1989) investigated whether training in reflection improved the quality of beginning preservice teachers' pedagogical thinking. He found student

teachers poorly aware of essential aspects of their teacher preparation, especially regarding evaluating their actions and preparation. According to Cook, "Apparently students' reflective ability grows slowly" (p.8).

Dena. September 10.

"Last night I was totally freaked out. During my methods class, I just started feeling a lot of self doubt. Do I know anything? Is this the right profession for me? I felt like everybody in the class knew what was going on except for me. What if it's not right for me? What do I do then? This is all I've ever wanted to do and now I'm not sure I can exactly answer why. I always could before, but this week I'm so confused."

Dena. October 1.

"I did it. I did it. I did it! I'm still floating...What a day!!!" Dena went on to review the activities she did with the classes and the praise her field study teacher gave her.

Joe had his doubts. On October 6 he wrote:

"I wonder if I'm expecting too much from this structured program?" and a week later: "How can a teacher hold every students' interest? Is this an impossible task?" Yet the next day...

Joe. October 14.

After he felt his first presentation was received well, Joe wrote:

"He actually liked my lecture and said he learned something...I feel good. It makes me feel like I'm going into the right career. How can any other career be as rewarding?"

Tonia. September 10.

"As time draws near toward actually becoming a teacher, my thoughts are, am I equipped with what it takes?"

Journal study

Allow me to share with you a study I conducted where a student teacher in social studies and his cooperating teacher each kept dialectical journals on the student teacher's actions and perceived experiences. The student teacher described how he

felt about his teaching activity and incorporated information about his thoughts as a teacher candidate. The cooperating teacher described how she thought the student teacher felt about his teaching in the classroom and her perceptions of how the students in the classroom responded to his teaching. After examining the journals of the participants, four categories or domains were discovered: ability of self, classroom skills, subject content, and concern for students. Examples of each category and responses are as follows with S standing for the student's response and C standing for the cooperating teacher's response.

Ability of self

S: "When students respect you, they will almost always obey you...the students appeared politely bored which makes me feel a little awkward as I think this is the most interesting stuff in the world..."

C: "___'s respectful attitude toward civil rights is good for all to see and hear...he should be really excited he got the student to comment...I'm sure he was pleased with the interest..."

Subject content

S: "A lot of info to get out and not enough time...I felt that I had to talk to them all hour without a break in methods, but, again, with the MMAT [standardized state test for Missouri] so

close...I try to get the students interested in the subject matter..."

C: "He didn't really have much choice about the materials for the MMAT preparation...he pointed out to me where the book had some inconsistencies; I'm really pleased he has started to do more research on his own..."

Classroom skills

S: "I could take roll while chatting with the students...I feel more comfortable writing on the board; I wish we would have practiced that in methods...I did not have to shush the class as I had to during the first few weeks..."

C: "_____ is aware of the need to include more and more people in discussion. He knows this...he had good discipline, friendly, but firm...._____ is handling this fairly well for a new teacher. This is rough..."

Concern for students

S: "Outstanding [praising a student]...I think that'd be pretty interesting...he's worked really hard since I've shown an interest in him and his work...nobody's going to fail...I admonished him [student] with humor...belief in praising them in front of their peers..."

C: "Friendly approach...he hands the tests out individually so he

can say a word or two to everyone...he's worked really hard with some of the students...they respect him..."

Through ethnographic research discovery methods, four patterns of concern emerged as the student teachers completed their assignments and the cooperating teachers evaluated their progress. The student teachers and the cooperating teachers also were asked to complete a Student Teacher Follow Up and the Cooperating Teacher Follow Up, respectively. With only slight modifications from the models created by Stahlhut, Williford, Hawkes and Fratianni (1991), 30 questions were listed with a grading scale used in schools of A, B, C, D, F and N/A. That last week of student teaching, both groups also were asked to complete a survey this researcher created, the AAVPPI Survey, based on the studies of the six domains of Holmes and Barbour (1988). The results of those studies are as follows.

Stahlhut's et. al study was conducted with students in Northern Iowa University's teacher preparation program. Student teachers were asked to assess teacher education program contributions to 29 competencies relevant to teaching effectiveness, plus provide an overall evaluation of their own teaching effectiveness. Cooperating teachers also ranked student teachers on 29 competencies. The average mean by the student teachers was 2.66. The cooperating teachers was 3.07, for a difference of .41.

The second study was based on the six domains which Holmes

and Barbour discussed which were developed after studying their four students in the teacher preparation program at Towson State University (Md). Using their categories of assessment, practical skills, view of work, investment, interpersonal, and attitudes, I constructed a 25 question survey for students at the University of Missouri-Kansas City with questions I felt would be categorized under each section and have a direct relationship to the goals of UMKC's teacher education program. A Likert scale of 5 for extremely well and 1 for very poorly was included. None of the six domain categories was labeled on the survey. For the 25 questions on the AAVPPI, the average mean for the students was 3.30; 3.48 for the cooperating teacher, for a difference of only .18.

Results

This research combined the mixed models of qualitative ethnography and quantitative survey methodology. The perceptions of student teachers and their cooperating teachers were evaluated using both local and national data. In the quantitative research studies, the cooperating teachers consistently scored the student teacher higher in teaching ability than the student teachers perceived of their own skills. Results from the second study were slightly closer, perhaps because the survey was tailored to more closely match the emphases stressed by the University of Missouri-Kansas City. In order to find out why the results were

closer and what the preservice teachers were thinking as they completed their field study and student teaching phases, the ethnographic portion of the study can become very helpful to understanding individual actions, reactions, and feelings motivating preservice teachers in the classroom and with their teaching preparation. A component in self esteem might also be in order.

Significance

Field study students and student teachers have many thoughts about the discipline and curriculum they have chosen, how well they are prepared in methodology and pedagogy by the university, and how well all their preparation translates into making them effective in the classroom while leaving their egos at acceptable confidence levels. While it is difficult to distinguish between the knowledge a student brings into the teacher education preparation program and the knowledge gained while in the program, that distinction may be less important in the long run than what students think about their teaching and the environment in which they find themselves. Observations of the students in the field by the university supervisor, listening to the students in seminar, and talking with the cooperating teachers reveals external actions and characteristics. Asking preservice teachers and cooperating teachers to complete surveys is another way to gather information. One way to attempt to reach the inner actions

and thoughts of students is to ask them to keep journals reflecting on their thinking and their actions. Outsiders can only make guesses and assumptions. For further research, teacher education practitioners need to learn more about what the students think as they complete the path of the preservice teachers. Only by having a format for learning that is discernible, can we as teacher education preparation professionals continue working to improve the quality of our universities' experiences for the students preparing them to be the best teachers possible.

Sandra. March 15.

"Teaching really is one of the most important jobs an individual can have. I have gained a whole new respect for teachers in general and a different level of confusion and contempt for those teachers who don't make an effort to do their jobs well..."

Can training in the teacher education preparation program be demonstrated and better understood through the use of journals? I think so.

Tonia. November 30, her last day of field study observation, wrote:

"As I began to walk away some of the second hour students saw me go and asked the cooperating teacher if I'd be with the class anymore. When they were told I would not be back, they said 'aw-w-w.' I waved bye and wished them luck."

I wish all students luck.

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Appendices

AAVPPI Survey
Student Version

Directions: Circle the number of the response that best fits your feelings. 5 means extremely well or yes; 1 means very poorly or no.

	extremely well			very poorly	
	5	4	3	2	1

1. How well did the university prepare you to teach?	5	4	3	2	1
2. How successful do you feel your student teaching assignment has been?	5	4	3	2	1
3. How willing are you to dedicate yourself to teaching?	5	4	3	2	1
4. How well did the university prepare you in theories of education?	5	4	3	2	1
5. How well did the university prepare you in your subject area of expertise?	5	4	3	2	1
6. How well did the university prepare you to understand young adults' developmental stages as they relate to teaching and learning?	5	4	3	2	1
7. How well did the university prepare you to handle ethical dilemmas in your teaching?	5	4	3	2	1
8. How well did the university prepare you to teach in a diverse, multicultural setting?	5	4	3	2	1
9. How well did the university prepare you to deal with discipline problems in the classroom?	5	4	3	2	1
10. How well did the university prepare you in methods to motivate students?	5	4	3	2	1
11. How well did the university prepare you to organize your class for effective time management?	5	4	3	2	1
12. How well did the university prepare you to create functional lesson plans?	5	4	3	2	1

AAVPPI survey/student version/page 2

13. How well did the university prepare you to create assignments appropriate for the students' skill levels?	5	4	3	2	1
14. How well did the university prepare you to evaluate assignments given to students?	5	4	3	2	1
15. How well did the university prepare you to use resource and support materials?	5	4	3	2	1
16. How positive did you feel about your university preparation for teaching <u>before</u> you started student teaching?	5	4	3	2	1
17. How positive do you feel now about your university preparation for teaching?	5	4	3	2	1
18. How has the university prepared you to objectively assess your teaching?	5	4	3	2	1
19. Have you increased your empathetic feelings for student needs?	5	4	3	2	1
20. How well do you think you were matched with your cooperating teacher?	5	4	3	2	1
21. How well do you think you've grown to accept criticism from your cooperating teacher?	5	4	3	2	1
22. How well do you think you're grown to accept criticism from your supervising teacher?	5	4	3	2	1
23. How well do you think your student teaching experience has helped you become a better teacher?	5	4	3	2	1
24. How well do you think this student teaching experience has helped you develop methods of dealing with students from multicultural backgrounds?	5	4	3	2	1
25. Have you decided that teaching is worth the commitment?	5	4	3	2	1

STUDENT TEACHER FOLLOW UP

Instructions: Indicate how well your educational experiences at the University of Missouri-Kansas City prepared you for the general areas and teaching responsibilities listed below. Use an A, B, C, D, F rating scale just as if you were assigning grades. You may use N/A by selecting "G" if an item is inappropriate or not applicable to your situation.

Teaching subject: _____

	High	Low	N/A
1. Effective oral communication	A B C D F G		
2. Effective written communication	A B C D F G		
3. General education background	A B C D F G		
4. The ability to locate and use needed information	A B C D F G		
5. Understanding and using different theories, models and strategies for teaching and learning	A B C D F G		
6. Developing knowledge and skills in your major subject area	A B C D F G		
7. Understanding child growth and development	A B C D F G		
8. Developing instructional objectives and devising lesson plans appropriate to their achievement	A B C D F G		
9. Motivating students to learn	A B C D F G		
10. Stimulating students to become independent learners	A B C D F G		
11. Promoting the development of students' problem-solving and critical thinking skills	A B C D F G		
12. Classroom management and discipline	A B C D F G		
13. Relating instruction in all areas to a global perspective	A B C D F G		
14. Integrating mainstreamed students into regular classes	A B C D F G		

	High		Low		N/A
15.Adjusting/individualizing instruction according to differing learner needs	A	B	C	D	F G
16.Promoting students' confidence and feelings of self worth	A	B	C	D	F G
17.Working with students from differing social, economic and ethnic backgrounds	A	B	C	D	F G
18.Identifying/diagnosing physical, emotional, familial, social problems that may interfere with student teaching	A	B	C	D	F G
19.Developing and interpreting tests and other means of evaluation	A	B	C	D	F G
20.Evaluating and selecting instructional materials and media	A	B	C	D	F G
21.Integrating library and media resources into instruction	A	B	C	D	F G
22.Understanding and using technology (computers, video, projectors, etc.)	A	B	C	D	F G
23.Working effectively with other teachers and administrators	A	B	C	D	F G
24.Handling the legal and ethical aspects of teaching (record keeping, disclosing information, dealing with students, etc.)	A	B	C	D	F G
25.Communicating and working with parents/guardians and the school community	A	B	C	D	F G
26.Working with/utilizing community resources	A	B	C	D	F G
27.Self evaluation--evaluating your own teaching performance and making adjustments when desirable	A	B	C	D	F G
28.Understanding and applying the findings of ed. research and the professional lit.	A	B	C	D	F G
29.Taking advantage of professional opportunities (visiting others schools, participating in in-service, etc.)	A	B	C	D	F G
30.Compared to other teachers of like experience in similar teaching positions, how would you rate your overall teaching performance.	A	B	C	D	F G

*Adapted from a study by Stahlut, Williford, Hawkes & Fratianni.

ANCEL, JUDY	2119	CONNELLY, MICHAEL	2331
ANWAY, JOE	2367	CORSON, MARY	2372
APPEL, BRUCE	2235	COYNE, KEVIN	2229
AREL, ARLINE	2312	COYNE, PAT	2288
AREL, GARY	2222	COYNE, PATTY	2457
ARNOLD, JOHN	2285	CRABTREE, LINDA	2336
ASHBY, JACK	2224	CRAFT, BETTY	2270
ASHER, BLAKE	2229	CURTRIGHT, HELEN	2267
ATKINS, BILL	2284		
AVERY, LOIS	2317	DAMMINGA, LINDA	2212
AYTES, MEL	2332	DAMMINGA, PAUL	2295
		DAVIS, JILL	2213
BAGGERLY, HAROLD	2283	DELONG, DENNIS	2224
BARK, NORMA	2255	DENMAN, FAYE	2219
BARR, BARBARA	2145	DIKLICH, DICK	2061
BARR, SHARI	2259	DINGES, TED	2287
BARTELS, DAVID	2388	DUCK, BOB	2222
BAUMGARTEN, R.	2268	DULOHERY, M.	2140
BEARD, SCOTT	2363		
BEISEL, JAMES	2367	EAGLE, MARTHA	2264
BELL, GLENDA	2220	EARLE, ALLEN	2386
BENSON, MICHAEL	2373	EDWARDS, SYLVIA	2337
BERTKEN, BEVERLEY	2314	ENGEL, BILL	2368
BLAGI, DALE	2340	EUBANK, BARBARA	2211
BILLINGER, VICKIE	2212	EUBANK, MARY	2356
BORG, BRETT	2228	EUSTON, TERRIE	2203
BORG, SUE	2214		
BRAINARD, CHIP	2140	FAIRBANKS, BILL	2061
BRESETTE, BOB	2441	FARMER, CAROL	2312
BRINK, MELANIE	2324	FENSTER, EUGENE	2280
BROWN, CAROLYN	2210	FITZGERALD, ALICE	2201
BROWN, DEBRA	2277	FLICK-HRUSKA, C.	2252
BROWN, JOAN	2336	FLORES, LUIS	2331
BRUNDICK, EDNA	2229	FRANKLIN, ANN	2228
BRYAN, JUDY	2269	FREY, MOIRA	2341
BURTON, ROBERT	2229		
		GEOGHEGAN, ANDY	2258
CALAHAN, DEBBIE	2110	GILBERT, JAMES	2344
CANOW, KURT	2330	GILBERT, NANCY	2262
CAPRANICA, MARY	2248	GIPPNER, RON	2229
CAPRANICA, PAT	2365	GLENNEMEIER, KAREN	2342
CHURCH, JOHN	2344	GLOOR, JOANN	2364
CLARK, SUSAN	2075	GLYNN, NORRIS	2229
CLARK, WILL	2284	GOLDSTEIN, MARVIN	2343